

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : TPHY, PARM

SUBJECT : MULTINATIONAL NUCLEAR CENTERS: ASSESSMENT OF
KEY ASIAN COUNTRIES' ATTITUDES TOWARD PLUTONIUM

REF: A. TEL AVIV 4413

B. TEL AVIV 3045

C. STATE 154049

1. ISRAEL APPEARS TO BE MOVING AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR A NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM (SEE REFS). WHILE CERTAIN PROBLEMS, INCLUDING SAFEGUARDS, HAVE YET TO BE RESOLVED, THE PROGRAM IS EXPECTED TO BE IMPLEMENTED SINCE ISRAEL HAS NO INDIGENOUS ENERGY RESOURCES.

2. ISRAEL'S PROJECTED REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN UNOFFICIALLY STATED AS SIX REACTORS OF APPROX 600 MEGAWATT SIZE. CONSEQUENTLY, WITH PRESENT TECHNOLOGY THEY WOULD NOT FIND IT ECONOMICALLY JUSTIFIABLE TO BUILD AN INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE FACILITY. YET ISRAEL'S STRONG DRIVE AND DESIRE FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY COULD OVERRIDE ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS (AS WAS CASE WITH KFIR FIGHTER). ADDITIONALLY ISRAEL HAS THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE TO DESIGN ITS OWN NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE FACILITY, BUT IS LACKING IN THE INDUSTRIAL BASE TO SUPPLY THE NECESSARY COMPONENTS AND SUPPORT. PENDING CHANGE IN THE ECONOMIC AND/OR TECHNOLOGICAL SITUATION IT WILL EXPECT THE US TO BE THE SOURCE AND GUARANTOR OF THEIR ENRICH-
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MENT AND REPROCESSING NEEDS. IT WILL ALSO PROBABLY WISH TO STOCKPILE ONE/TWO YEARS OF ENRICHED URANIUM FOR CONTINGENCY PURPOSES.

3. STRONG TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS COULD ARGUE FOR THE LOCATION OF A MULTINATIONAL FACILITY IN ISRAEL BASED ON ITS REGIONAL DOMINANCE IN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL FIELDS. BUT POLITICAL REALITIES WOULD APPEAR TO RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF ISRAEL AS SITE FOR REGIONAL FACILITY FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. POLITICAL FACTORS MIGHT ALSO AFFECT WILLINGNESS OF OTHER COUNTRIES TO HAVE ISRAEL PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL FACILITY.

4. ISRAEL IS KNOWN OR SUSPECTED TO BE WORKING IN SEVERAL OF THE TECHNOLOGIES OF THE NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE. URANIUM EXTRACTION FROM PHOSPHATE MINING OPERATIONS AND WORK ON GAS CENTRIFUGE HAVE BEEN UNDERWAY IN ISRAEL FOR SOME YEARS. OTHER RELATED TECHNOLOGIES ARE BEING RESEARCHED, E.G., LASER ISOTOPE SEPARATION, AND THE AVAILABILITY OF A REPROCESSING FACILITY FOR DIMONA BY-PRODUCTS IS A POSSIBILITY, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO LOCAL EVIDENCE THAT SUCH A FACILITY EXISTS. TO WHAT EXTENT THESE EFFORTS ARE PRIMARILY DIRECTED TOWARD COMMERCIAL USES OR TOWARD WEAPONRY IS UNKNOWN. (THE LAST AD HOC CURSORY INVESTIGATION OF DIMONA BY US WAS IN 1969.) IF THE DIMONA FACILITY DOES HAVE AN ASSOCIATED REPROCESSING FACILITY IT MAY WELL BE FOR PLUTONIUM EXTRACTION FOR USE IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. AGAIN ISRAEL HAS THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE TO PERFORM THIS WORK, THUS DEBATE CENTERS ON WHETHER IT HAS EXERCISED ITS NUCLEAR OPTION. THEIR OFFICIAL STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN FRAMED IN MANNER OF YES AND NO THEREBY MAINTAINING THEIR OPTIONS AND IMAGE.

CONCLUSION: WITH ISRAEL NOW PROCEEDING WITH PLANNING FOR USE OF NUCLEAR POWER SYSTEM MANY OF THESE QUESTIONS AND UNKNOWN MAY SOON SURFACE. ISRAEL WILL BE FORCED TO DEVELOP POLICY REGARDING BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PROGRAMS AND DECIDE TO WHAT EXTENT THEY WANT OR CAN AFFORD SELF SUFFICIENCY. TOON

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